

Chris O'Brien

From: Jordan Goyette <goyettejordan@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 29, 2021 8:13 AM
To: House Finance Committee
Subject: Fwd: Testimony on Article 11, against at this time

*Chairman Abney, my apologies.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Jordan Goyette <goyettejordan@yahoo.com>
Date: April 29, 2021 at 8:07:12 AM EDT
To: HouseFinance@rileislature.gov
Subject: Testimony on Article 11, against at this time

To Chairs Pearson, Coyne & members of the committees,

I first would like to express my gratitude and excitement at the fact that both Governor McKee as well as the General Assembly leadership has expressed a willingness to advance this issue. Legalizing cannabis is not only the smart economic thing to do, but is also the morally just policy. For decades misguided cannabis prohibition and the broader Drug War have ruined lives while failing to actually achieve its mission. It is a broken policy. But this article must be drastically rewritten. Someone can use vegetable oil in making their own edibles but not butter? A staggering penalty for someone over 21 maybe giving a 19 year old a joint? This is trying to reinvent the wheel on prohibition. It is nothing but nonsensical and backwards-thinking policy. We don't need to reinvent the wheel on prohibition, we need to break it.

Legalizing cannabis for adults is a smart policy for Rhode Island and the right thing to do. It's time for us to join neighboring states and take a new approach. But we need to do this right and learn from our neighbor's shortcomings in this effort.

We need to automatically expunge prior cannabis offenses from criminal records and make sure that all Rhode Islanders can benefit from the legal cannabis market. That means policies that foster an equitable, inclusive, and fair cannabis industry, along with reinvesting cannabis taxes into people and communities impacted by the war on drugs. Therefore The general assembly should first amend any advanced proposal to 1) allow expungement regardless of the weight or amount of cannabis involved, 2) expand eligibility to cover all cannabis offenses under the Controlled Substances Act (not limiting it only to possession, sale & distribution charges), 3) create a system for automatic expungement that does not put the burden of those wronged by making them petition the courts to begin the process. It is nothing but inflicting insult to injury. This is an essential component of any legalization effort going forward.

The regulating agencies and advisory committees also need to have space for those who have been directly impacted and harmed by prohibition. Both the proposed Cannabis Control Commission and the advisory committee must include substantial representation from people who have been affected by the War on Drugs.

The social equity licensing program also needs to be substantially expanded and strengthened. Those communities who have been tortured by the war on drugs, their people locked away in cages for something we are now considering legalizing. Legalization cannot just be seen as something that can help pad state or corporate CEO coffers. The industry must be locally grown, and locally operated. That's why the assembly should also consider the idea of worker-owned cannabis cooperatives. Doing these things will guarantee that legalizing cannabis benefits working people benefit economically, especially among communities of color. The state can expand upon the infrastructure it created in 2017, ensuring that workers get equitably shares of the profits generated. Cooperatives empower workers to control and benefit from the profits of the business because they are founded on the principle of democratic decision-making. Research also shows that those dollars continue to circulate within that community at a higher rate than other ownership structures where businesses or contractors, who often don't live in the community, take and spend those profits elsewhere. And, according to a 2019 study, people of color account for 57% of worker-owners in cooperatives. We shouldn't allow the wealthy to devour another industry just because they have the clout to jump in line and access to almost endless capital.

Finally, while the proposal of the Cannabis Equity Fund is a good idea, there needs to be a dedicated share of tax revenue explicitly directed towards communities disproportionately impacted by the War on Drugs. A significant portion of tax revenue should be dedicated to repairing the decades of harm that have been inflicted upon those communities.

As a voter in Rhode Island, I hope you will use your position in the General Assembly to advocate for this legislation to include a strong focus on social equity and fairness. This issue is very important to me. I appreciate your consideration.

Thank You,

Jordan Goyette
[114 uphill ave](#)
[Warwick, RI 02886](#)
goyettejordan@yahoo.com
[4015274415](tel:4015274415)

Sent from my iPhone